

ferred to Tony Coelho, chairman, Justin Dart, former Chair, President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities; John Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO, and Al Checchi, cochair-

man, Northwest Airlines; and actor Christopher Reeve, who was paralyzed in an equestrian accident.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany and an Exchange With Reporters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin May 23, 1996

Chechnya

Q. Mr. President, there are reports there are peace talks between Mr. Yeltsin and the leader of the Chechnyan group. Is that encouraging to you?

The President. Of course. The Chancellor and I, I think—I don't want to speak for him, but I think we both would be very pleased if that could be resolved and the President could go back to devoting his energies to strengthening democracy and the economy of Russia. I know he wants peace there. I believe he's working toward it.

Chancellor Kohl. I do hope that this will turn out well. It's a very important issue, obviously, also for the elections.

Chancellor Kohl's Visit

The President. Let me say to all of you, as you know, we're going to have a few moments later, and we'll answer all your questions at the press conference.

But I want to welcome Chancellor Kohl back to the United States and to perhaps our most German-American city, Milwaukee, a place which he's now visiting for the first time. I want to thank him for his friendship to our country and for his support for freedom. The world is a better place because of his leadership. And I have benefited greatly from his wise counsel, and we've had a good partnership. And I'm delighted to have him here in the United States and especially in Milwaukee today.

Chancellor Kohl. May I perhaps make a few remarks on my part. I would like to thank the President. I would like to thank you, my friend, Bill, for this very warm welcome. When I was told that this would be on our itinerary, I was very enthusiastic about it because as a student I read a lot about this State, about this part of the country.

And you know that many generations back and throughout many generations, many people from my home region, from the Palatine, immigrated to this part of the world. And the first thing I saw when I arrived yesterday night at the airport was a big sign announcing the product of a company called Kohl. And people are very friendly. Unfortunately, we only have a day, but I do hope that I shall have the opportunity to come back at some later stage.

So now I'm looking very much forward to our talks. I must say, generally speaking, one of the best experiences that I've had in this office is the very good relation that we have been able to strike up, the President and myself, and the good conversations that we've had over the years. And let me say, I'm very pleased that we were able to move matters along in many issues over the years.

And I think more than any other country, the two of us probably also got involved in Russia. And the two of us took a very personal interest in Russia. There are a lot of people who warned us because of the risks that were involved. But let me say, we are very well aware of what it means if Russia now finally goes forward, pursues the path of reform, or the sort of risks it entails when it falls back into the old habits of the past.

And if you want to do something good, please pray now for the rain going away and for us having nice weather. [*Laughter*]

1996 Election

Q. Mr. President, there's a suspicion that election-year politics had something to do with your bringing Chancellor Kohl here.

The President. Well, I'll tell you how we came about to do this. When Prime Minister Major came to the United States, you remember, I took him to Pittsburgh. And it wasn't an election

time then, but his grandfather had been there as a worker. And it seems to me that it's important for the United States to remember a lot of our roots, which in the beginning, of course, were European roots.

When I was with the Chancellor last time in Germany, I gave him a copy of the Declaration of Independence, which was printed in 1776 in German in the State of Pennsylvania because we had so many German-Americans. So those two experiences made me think that the next time he came here for a visit, we should do it here in Milwaukee instead of Washington.

Q. No politics?

Chancellor Kohl. Incidentally, it is true, I mean, elections are part of democracy, are they not? So, you know, there are elections almost constantly in democracies, and the only other choice we have is we say we don't meet when there's an election going on. And then you will write there's no personal chemistry between the two; it doesn't seem to work. And now you're telling us we're not supposed to meet because there's an election going on. So, well, I suppose you will have to write there's an election going on and that's probably—[laughter].

The President. Thank you. We'll answer more questions later.

[At this point, one group of reporters left the room, and another group entered.]

Chancellor Kohl's Visit

The President. Let me say, if I might, that it is a great honor for me as President and a great personal pleasure for me as a friend of the Chancellor's to welcome him back to the United States, and especially here to Milwaukee, which is the most German-American city in the United States.

I am personally very grateful to Chancellor Kohl for his wise counsel to me, for his unfailing friendship to the United States, and for his determined devotion to freedom. We have a lot of important things to discuss today. I'm looking forward to that, and of course afterward we will make ourselves available to you again for your questions.

Q. Mr. President, last time you were treated by Chancellor Kohl to some Italian pasta. Will you treat him to some German food today?

The President. Well, we're going to a local diner which is sort of a community place in Milwaukee, and he will be able to eat whatever he wants.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10:12 a.m. at City Hall. In his remarks, the President referred to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. Chancellor Kohl spoke in German, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany in Milwaukee May 23, 1996

President Clinton. Good afternoon. It's indeed a pleasure for me to welcome Chancellor Kohl back to the United States. He's now in his 14th year in office, the longest serving leader in the West. And not only Germany and the European Union but all of the West has been well served by his leadership, his devotion to freedom and to free markets.

He's a friend to whom three American Presidents have turned for support and wise counsel. And I am especially grateful for the relationship that we have enjoyed and the counsel he has shared with me. During his tenure, the relationship between our two nations has grown strong-

er and deeper than ever, and it has become a powerful force for positive change.

As Chancellor, Helmut Kohl has visited Washington 23 times. He knows the shortcuts through the traffic better than most of us who have come here more recently. We thought it was high time that the Chancellor saw another part of our great country. What better place than Milwaukee, a city that German immigrants helped to build, a city so rich in German heritage and culture that in the 19th century it was called the *Deutsche Athens*, the German Athens. It is also fitting that as Chancellor, as he approaches the mark for the longest tenure of